

**Township of Stirling-Rawdon
Planning Advisory Committee
Minutes
July 14, 2020 – 7:00 pm**

Members Present: Acting Chair, Jeremy Solmes
Member Dean Graff
Member Grant Hagerman
Member John Rock
Member Don Stewart
Member Sari Watson

Members Absent: Chair Bob Mullin (with notice)

Staff Present: Roxanne Hearn, CAO/Treasurer
Kathy Pearl, Secretary
Sydney Dodson, Deputy Clerk
Justin Harrow, Director of Planning & Development,
County of Hastings
Emily Galloway, Planner, County of Hastings

1. Call to Order

Acting Chair Solmes called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

2. Adoption of Agenda

Resolution #1

Moved by: Dean Graff

Seconded by: Grant Hagerman

That the agenda for the Planning Committee meeting held on July 14, 2020 be adopted as presented.

Carried.

3. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest

None noted.

4. Minutes

Resolution #2

Moved by: Don Stewart

Seconded by: John Rock

That the minutes of the Planning Advisory Committee Regular and Public Meeting on February 11, 2020 be approved.

Carried.

5. Public Hearings / Public Meetings

5.1 Rezoning Application – Part Lot 4, Concession 8, Township of Stirling-Rawdon

Resolution #3

Moved by: Grant Hagerman

Seconded by: Sari Watson

That the Committee do now hold a Public Meeting (at 7:05 pm) regarding the following: Rezone approximately 1 acre of land legally described as Part Lot 4, Concession 8, Township of Stirling-Rawdon from the “Permanent Agricultural (PA)” zone to a “Community Facility (CF)” zone to permit the construction of a school house for Amish children.

Carried.

The purpose of the zoning by-law amendment is to rezone approximately 1 acre of land legally described as Part Lot 4, Concession 8, Township of Stirling-Rawdon from the “Permanent Agricultural (PA)” zone to a “Community Facility (CF)” zone to permit the construction of a school house for Amish children.

The Secretary advised that notice of the meeting was given to all persons and agencies entitled to receive notice on June 24, 2020.

Emily Galloway, Planner, Hastings County spoke to the application stating no objections and recommended the area be rezoned to Community Facility – Exception 3 (CF-3) Zone.

The Secretary advised that three letters of objection and five letters of support along with an affidavit and petition with a further 20 signatures in support of the application had been received.

The Acting Chair then called for comment from those members of the public in favour or against the application. Comments were given virtually via Zoom.

Gareth Williams, 1091 Cooke Road objects solely on a zoning bylaw basis and has discussed the matter with the Hastings Federation of Agriculture and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. Mr. Williams is also concerned about road safety, environmental impacts, potable water supply and health and safety, and inquired if there would be a better site for the school.

Lynn DiPietrantonio, 442 Cooke Road stated she is in favour of the proposed school at 991 Cooke Road.

Mandy Webb and Don Piper, 925 Cooke Road are in favour of the school and believe there is a need for a school on this road. Ms. Webb indicated there are issues with speeding and hopes this will calm traffic. Ms. Webb stated she received an anonymous letter which was sent to residents in opposition and indicated she did not agree with the letter.

Stasia Bennett, 751 Cooke Road agreed with Ms. Webb. She commented that education is important. Ms. Bennett also received the anonymous letter and was taken aback by it and felt it is a "not in my back yard" scenario. Ms. Bennett stated she is in full support of the application.

Dave Black, 442 Cooke Road acting as agent for Mr. Miller and Mr. Shetler (property owner) indicated that he went door to door and obtained 20 signatures in favour of the application. He feels that one acre of agricultural land converted to a school is insignificant compared to all the land the Amish have reclaimed over the years. Mr. Black spoke to the photos he had provided regarding a dip in the road east of the proposed entrance that was thought to be a detriment. The photos show that at no point are vehicles out of sight. Mr. Black also spoke to concerns with no shoulders on the roads and indicated that the school curriculum covers safety. Mr. Black stated that he discussed the matter today with a member of the Hastings Federation of Agriculture who stated they issued their

letter of objection prior to hearing all the facts. Mr. Black feels that teaching Amish children is teaching future farmers who will improve more land and more farmland in our County.

Hearing no more remarks, Acting Chair Solmes closed the public meeting.

Resolution #4

Moved by: Dean Graff

Seconded by: Grant Hagerman

That Committee do now adjourn the Public Meeting at 7:35 pm and resume regular business.

Carried.

6. Delegations

Erin and Jon Rifkin, 194 West Front Street – Request an amendment to the Zoning By-Law to allow for residential hens.

Erin and Jon Rifkin gave the following presentation:

We are here today to formally request an amendment to the Stirling Bylaws to allow for the keeping of residential hens by Town residents. We realize that this amendment would need to come with certain restrictions, and we hope to include the following conditions:

- -that the coop be clean, secure, and well-maintained in good working order;
- -that residents only keep hens as pets and for the laying of eggs to be consumed by the owner (not for sale);
- -that roosters not be allowed in town lots due to potential noise;
- -that backyard hens are limited to a reasonable number, one that we hope to discuss and agree upon with members of council. We would be in favour of a number somewhere between 4-10 hens, as is common in other municipalities.

We are in the midst of a global pandemic. Residents of Stirling have felt the effects of this, not just with stores and businesses closing and physical distancing orders, but even in our own grocery store. Food prices are on the rise in just about every department, staples are becoming non-existent on store shelves, and it can be difficult for families to find adequate supplies. Being able to have access to healthy, fresh eggs daily would be a huge advantage to families.

Stirling is a rural town, located next door to multiple farms. We have a local agricultural fair, horses in our Christmas parade, local Amish horse carts, a water buffalo farm and festival, community gardens, and even a tractor parade. Just down the street from my home is Farmtown Park, a museum dedicated to educating residents about Stirling's agricultural roots. People move to the town of Stirling looking for a community that appreciates country living. As demonstrated in our petition, many residents of Stirling agree with small backyard chicken flocks.

A common concern raised is the "noise and smell" that chickens could create, and how that would negatively affect neighbours and other residents. In fact, chickens are very quiet animals. According to the book (and numerous other sources) "City Chicks," by Pat Foreman, "laying hens at their loudest have about the same decibel level as human conversation (60 to 70 decibels). Hens are so quiet that there have been cases of family flocks being kept for years without the next-door neighbors knowing it. To some, noise is a concern with roosters and their pre-dawn heralding of sunrises. Many urban codes ban roosters, or only allow them to be kept with special permits." We are not asking for Stirling to allow roosters, as eggs, chicks, and young chickens are all easy to find online and from farmers. Hens do not crow loudly every morning as roosters do. Regarding waste, "a forty pound dog generates more solid waste than ten chickens. To be more specific, one 40 pound dog generates about $\frac{3}{4}$ (.75 pounds) of poo every day. Ten chickens generate about two-thirds (.66 pounds) daily poop." Chicken manure can also easily be added to the resident's compost and turned into rich fertilizer. Dog and cat waste does not have that advantage and must be thrown out.

Another concern is chicken flocks increasing the presence of predators. The fact is, Stirling is already home to predators and attractions for them. Foxes, raccoons, squirrels and others are drawn to bird feeders, community garbage cans, household garbage bags placed at the curb each week, and even fish ponds. If a chicken owner is responsible with their coop and their chickens' feed and takes measures such as fencing it properly with strong metal hardware cloth and taking the chicken feed in each night when the chickens are locked up in their coop, there will be much less to attract animals to the coop than to their neighbour's garbage cans.

Further, Stirling does not have a green bin composting program. As a mother of multiple young children, I have no choice currently but to throw out food scraps daily. Chickens are living composters; they eat just about anything you give them. As citizens concerned about our impact on the environment, we would embrace the opportunity to reduce our household waste and our reliance on the town landfill, as would many other Stirling

residents. Chickens are also excellent pest controllers, and consume ticks, mosquitos and other bugs, making them a welcome addition to many towns.

Stirling has two local businesses that sell chicken feed and supplies, Stirling Feed & Seed and Skinkle's Feed Depot. Backyard chicken owners would be a source of revenue for these businesses, as would local building supply stores such as Home Hardware and RONA, as people look to build secure, weather-appropriate coops. The town could also look at instituting a small license or initial inspection fee for prospective chicken owners similar to a dog license. This could bring in a small revenue for the town and help to cover the cost of dealing with any by-law complaints.

Many local municipalities recognize the benefits of and allow small numbers of backyard hens. Quinte West, Cobourg and Kingston all have clear bylaws allowing the practice. Toronto has run a successful and now expanding pilot program for the last several years. Locally and perhaps more comparatively, Cramahe Township has also recently amended their bylaws to allow backyard hens. They allow for 6 hens with reasonable restrictions, such as keeping the coop clean and secure, disposing of deceased animals properly, and not allowing them to roam free about the town. These restrictions are all similar to what would be in place for a dog, and dogs are less secure than chickens; they require daily walks, they are much bigger and stronger with hunting instincts, and sometimes are simply tied up with a leash in an unfenced backyard. Chickens, on the other hand, are kept in secure, locked runs that include fencing on the roof of the run to protect from large birds. If kept responsibly by an owner invested in their health and wellbeing, they pose less risk, and create less mess and noise than an average neighbourhood dog.

In closing, small flocks of backyard hens would give numerous advantages to Town residents willing care for them. As can be seen across Ontario and the rest of Canada, many municipalities are modernizing their thinking and amending bylaws to allow for residential hens with reasonable restrictions. I urge the Stirling Council to do the same. I look forward to discussing this matter further and hope that we come to a mutually agreeable decision that ensures all residents of the Town of Stirling can enjoy their property and all the advantages that come with small town living.

Acting Chair Solmes thanked the Rifkins for their presentation and provided an opportunity for the committee members to ask questions.

County of Hastings Director of Planning Justin Harrow provided comment to the Committee regarding the process for general amendments to the zoning by-law and indicated it would require consultation along with research into what other municipalities have done to ensure different perspectives are taken into account.

Resolution #5

Moved by: Dean Graff
Seconded by: Don Stewart

That the presentation by Erin and Jon Rifkin be received; and that the matter be referred back to staff and planning to bring a report and overall general zoning by-law amendment to the next planning meeting.

Carried.

7. Correspondence / Information

7.1 Petition – Back Yard Chicken

Resolution #6

Moved by: Grant Hagerman
Seconded by: John Rock

That the petition regarding back yard chickens be received as information; and further that the matter be referred back to staff for a report at the August 11, 2020 Planning Advisory Committee meeting.

Carried.

7.2 Memorandum from Hydro One regarding COVID-19 Land Use Planning Reviews

Resolution #7

Moved by: John Rock
Seconded by: Don Stewart

That the memo from Hydro one be received.

Carried.

7.3 Provincial Policy Statement from Hastings County

Resolution #8

Moved by: Don Stewart
Seconded by: Grant Hagerman

That the 2020 Provincial Policy Statement from Hastings County be received.

Carried.

- 7.4 Zoning By-law Amendment – to rezone a one acre parcel of land legally described as Part Lot 4, Concession 8, Township of Stirling-Rawdon – from “Permanent Agricultural” (PA) zone to “Community Facility” (CF) zone to permit the construction of a school house for Amish Children.**

Resolution #9

Moved by: John Rock
Seconded by: Grant Hagerman

That the Committee acknowledges receipt of a zoning by-law amendment to rezone a one acre parcel of land legally described as Part Lot 4, Concession 8, Township of Stirling-Rawdon from the “Permanent Agricultural” (PA) zone to “Community Facility” (CF-3) zone to permit the construction of a school house for Amish Children; and further recommends

That the same shall be forwarded to Council for approval by by-law.

Carried.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 pm.